

## VAT PETITION TO PRIME MINISTER

PRESSURE mounts on the government to make concessions to charities on Value Added Tax when the Chancellor announces his budget proposals on March 9. To prove the groundswell of support at grass roots level the VAT Reform Group delivered a petition to No 10.

Our picture shows Amorel Williams, Gordon Faddy, Tim Yeo, the Society's Director, Angela Rowe and Suzann Clark handing over the 25,000 signatures.

In addition the Society launched a controversial advertising campaign to bring home the message that the charities are being "robbed" by the Exchequer, and on February 1 the VAT Reform Group met the Economic Secretary at the Treasury, Jock Bruce-Gardyne, to reinforce their views. The meeting was "encouraging."

• Read all about the VAT battle on Page 12.



**'Deep shame that I have to beg... I want to survive... convinced there are good people who will help me'**

## Aid pours in after plea from Poland

A DESPERATE appeal from a disabled man in Poland begging for a food parcel has touched the hearts of the staff of The Spastics Society and supporters all over the country.

They have dug deep into their pockets and their larders to help the handicapped people in unhappy Poland, where shortages, food queues, and price rises have made life a battle for the able-bodied, and a nightmare for the disabled.

The letter arrived out of the blue from the man in Poznan (his name is being withheld in case the military authorities in Poland object to his initiative in

seeking aid). It was written in Polish, and Director Tim Yeo had it immediately translated, suspecting that it was of vital importance. It was.

The tragedy the letter unfolded brought new meaning to the stories from Poland which have dominated the media for so many sad weeks.

"Perhaps you will be surprised to receive a letter from a complete stranger," the letter began, "but I am compelled to appeal to your generosity and ask for your help in the form of a food parcel."

The writer revealed that he was aged 47, totally disabled, and living alone. "Because of the present situation in Poland I find it extremely difficult to obtain the essential food-

stuffs and other necessities. Everything is rationed but the monthly food ration is really sufficient for less than a week.

"To get this meagre ration requires queueing for between 12 and 19 hours per day which, for me, is impossible because of the state of my health. To obtain unrationed food is, for me, virtually impossible.

"No doubt at least part of this sorry story is already known to the British public! But it is likely that the situation can get worse, and very soon one will be faced with hunger. Already the only food I can obtain is bread and flour.

"It is with a deep sense of shame that I have to

• Continued on Page 3

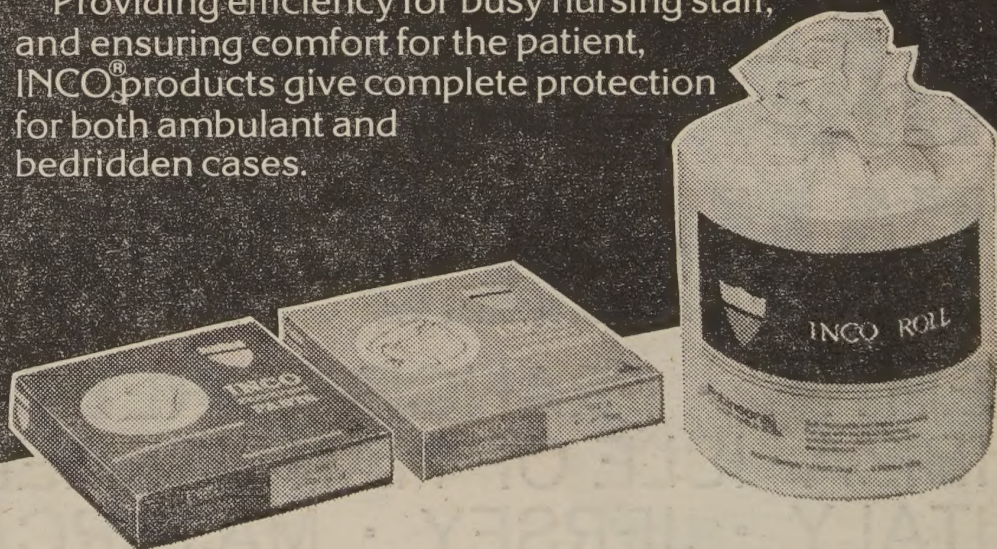
## Record-breaking Spastics News

THE volume of advertising in this issue of Spastics News has broken all previous records. To have achieved this success at a time of recession is particularly gratifying because advertising support is a sure indication of the value of Spastics News, and of its high standing in a highly competitive market.

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• PACKING parcels for Poland's disabled, and no shortage of volunteers at the Society's HQ. Pictured during a lunch-break "shift" are: Mary Stanton, Margaret Gallafent, Tony Ridgley, Theresa Shrimpton, Barbara Moss, and Roger Dyer.



## 'Help' — a mile away

YOU can see the Cleveland Work Centre's latest contribution in aiding the disabled a mile off — and that's official.

The sighting was reported by Cleveland Police after the long arm of the law had road tested the centre's "Help" pennant.

Works Centre manager Wally Hume was asked by the Ministry of Transport to update the existing pennant and now 1,000 have been produced at the Acklam Road, Middlesbrough, centre. It's made of retro-reflective super strong yellow material measuring 12in x 9in and bears the disabled logo plus the word "Help," and is fixed to the car window.

Said Wally: "It's designed for use by disabled motorists whenever they run into trouble, breakdowns, or anything where they need assistance, and they're the best on the market."

The pennants cost £3.50 each plus post and packing from the Cleveland Work Centre.

## Keith 'wins' an award for his bosses



KEITH Denham is both blind and spastic but nevertheless, works as a switchboard operator at Hackney Town Hall. As a result of his opportunity to undertake full time employment, Hackney Council was recently declared "Fit to Work," one of only two London boroughs to receive the accolade from the Manpower Services Commission.

The award was accepted by Keith from the MSC's operations manager for the London North Area, David Lifton, watched by the Mayor Martin Ottolangu.

THE Spastics Society has announced its annual literary contest with the hope that in this, the Society's 30th anniversary year, more shining talent will emerge from handicapped men, women and children.

Past contests have discovered exceptional talents, one being David Swift, a disabled man from Nottingham, whose musical play, "Johnny Samson," is to be produced at the Not-

## Why that MP was left holding the baby

WHEN an MP knocked on a constituent's door to learn for herself the problems faced by the disabled she found herself literally left holding the baby. For as the mother answered the door her hyperactive six-year-old Down's Syndrome child made off down the street.

The MP was left cradling the 10-month-old baby while the mother went in pursuit. As a demonstration of problems facing families with disability nothing could have had more practical value.

The visits up and down the country were arranged by the Society and other charities as the Joint Project for the Disabled to enable MPs to learn more about disability within their constituencies during IYDP.

So far 75 visits have been reported on, and so far only two cases led to ill-feeling. In one instance the MP brought along a journalist without permission, and used the occasion to talk to the Press. The host family felt "the whole affair was a publicity stunt for the MP." In another case the priority for discussion was local party business rather than conversations with the family.

Geoff White, of the National Association of Deaf, Blind and Rubella Handicapped, who has compiled the interim report found:

"The MPs' reactions were almost entirely positive. Many expressed admiration for the endeavours of the handicapped and their families to cope with the problems. Nearly all found their visits informative.

"Of the actions taken by MPs, one is moving his surgery downstairs to enable the handicapped to get to him, many are putting pressure on local authorities, and others have promised to raise various points with Ministers."

## We're off...on the annual quest for literary talent

tingham Playhouse later this year.

The contest is now open for contributions and the closing date for entries is Friday, April 30. Handicapped people of all types and ages are eligible to enter from all parts of Great Britain.

Categories are:

Schoolchildren up to and including 11 years of age. Entries not to exceed 1,000

words. First prize £15; second prize £10.

Adolescents, age 12 to 17 years. Entries not to exceed 2,000 words. First prize £50; second prize £25.

Adults, age 18 years and over. First prize £50; second prize £25.

Poetry — no guide to length can be given, any verse form may be used. Schoolchildren up to and including 12 years of age. First prize £15; second prize £10. Teenagers and adults age 13 years and over. First

prize £50; second prize £25.

Winners will be invited to a celebration lunch and prize giving ceremony in London with all expenses paid.

Remember, The Spastics Society wants to hear from any person with literary aspirations who was born handicapped or became handicapped during early childhood.

Send for application forms now to Mrs Nina Heycock, Organiser, 35 Harrington Gardens, South Kensington, London SW7 4JT.

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## Oh! our Arctic feat...

A SNOW-bound Britain seemed quite tropical to four frozen fund-raisers — they trekked 3,583 miles through the Arctic Circle to Europe's northernmost point, North Cape in Norway.

And after encountering temperatures of minus 50 degrees Centigrade their hearts were warmed to discover they had raised £2,000 for the White Lodge Centre for Spastic Children run by three local groups and for two other charities.

The four with fortitude are all Surrey police constables, Peter Ritchie, Des McFadden, Fred Jackson and Dick Bond, whose freezing feat took a month to complete.



● PAUL Vander-Molen who led what was almost certainly the most audacious, daring and dramatic fund-raising venture on behalf of the Society — the successful navigation of the Alsek River in the Yukon.

BUYERS of TV programmes from all over the world will gather in Cannes in April to see footage of a unique expedition over which a question mark will always hang — why did Thierry Giorgetti die?

The 27 minute programme was shot along 250 miles of raging icy water cutting through the largest ice field in the Northern Hemisphere — the location the Alsek River. No one had ever explored it from its source at the aptly named Disappointment River down to the sea, until that is, last year.

## Explore

Then it was navigated by a team of international explorers who, having planned the perilous voyage, decided to use the trip to raise funds for the Society.

Said Paul Vander Molen, the Englishman who headed the expedition by kayak: "We wanted to do something different and then having organised the expedition saw it as a way of raising money for a charity. The Spastics Society seemed the obvious choice, especially with its involvement with canoeing at Churchtown Farm in Cornwall." But he added: "We learnt more in the the year we planned and executed the trip than in the 20 years leading up to it, but nothing is worth losing a friend."

Thierry's death was inexplicable — three out of four who navigated the treacherous stretch of water did so successfully, the fourth did not. As the minutes passed they realised something had gone dreadfully wrong, and then within half an hour, the helicopter with them just for that day had lifted Thierry's body from the raging water.

"He was only 20, a brilliant bloke with years of experience and we'll never know what went wrong," said Paul.

The last half minute of

## Vice Chairman elected by Executive

AT its last meeting the Society's Executive Council elected Mr Iorwerth Thomas as vice-chairman, in addition to Mr Derek Ashcroft.

Mr Thomas, who has a spastic son, has been a member of the Executive Council since 1970, and was the honorary treasurer from 1976 to 1979.

## Bobath course

A COURSE for teachers working with handicapped children will be held at the Bobath Centre on March 4 and 5, 1982. Course fee £30.

Applications to the Secretary, Bobath Centre, 5 Netherhall Gardens, London NW3.

## Desperate plea from Poland

Continued from Page 1

beg for help. I do this because I want to survive and because I have faith in human nature. I am convinced that somewhere there are good people who will help me. It is really the fault of the system which allowed such deterioration of conditions, so badly affecting all members of the community.

"Once again I should like to ask for your forgiveness and indulgence and I hope that you will realise that I am asking for help because I find myself in an impossible situation.

"I shall be extremely grateful if you would respond to my humble appeal for help."

Who could resist such a plea? Certainly not Tim Yeo and his staff in London. Certainly not the staff and residents of the Society's 60 schools, centres, workshops; its shops, and its local groups throughout the country. People who work for the cause of the Society proved that if you care about the needs of others less fortunate, there is always room in your heart to find that extra help to meet an urgent need.

"Operation Poland" swung into action. Arrangements were made with the Sue Ryder Foundation (Poland) to receive the parcels and

transport them to Polish organisations for the disabled. The Society's staff in London began arriving for work with bulging shopping bags containing the goods which were most needed — cereals, sugar, rice, flour, fats (such as butter, oil, margarine), vitamin pills, soap, and washing powder. Items which pack our supermarket shelves in Britain, but which mean hours of queueing in Poland.

## Gifts

There was no shortage of volunteers to give up lunch-breaks, or to stay after work, to pack parcels. And with donations from the Society's local voluntary groups, came news of efforts being made all over the country to help Poland's most unfortunate minority. As one caller to Spastics News put it: "I know what it is like to be disabled in Britain, it's no fun, but I have enough to eat. . . I've suddenly realised what it must be like to be hungry in Poland and unable to go and queue for basic necessities. It's too horrible to contemplate."

Many people feel the same, and "Operation Poland" will go on. It must be emphasised that it does not involve Spastics Society funds donated for the care of the handicapped at home—this is an extra voluntary effort by staff and supporters touched by an appeal which can't be ignored.

And if you are wondering about that letter writer who had to forget his pride and write to strangers in London to beg for food. In his lonely home in Poland he should by now have received a very special parcel, with love, from the strangers who became his friends.



● PAUL, Thierry Giorgetti and Laurent Nicolet amid the turbulent waters which were to claim the life of Thierry in an accident which will never be explained.

Thierry's life is shown on the film which is also being screened at the International Canoe Exhibition at Crystal Palace on February 20. The expedition had many spin-offs — including the collection of rare specimens of spiders, over £3,000 in funds from a quiz devised by the Society's appeals officer Valerie Lane shown on the Thames TV programme "Ace reports."

The actual amount raised has not been finalised and Paul said he thought that the tremendous support for the Penlee lifeboat disaster had accounted for some money that would have come the Society's way. Now he is planning a new expedition — this time with six spastic children kayaking down rivers in France. It is planned for June with eight members of a support team.

Said Paul: "We will be kayaking, camping, visiting castles and also going up the Eiffel Tower — that sort of thing."

The expedition was suggested by Mike Cotton, warden of Churchtown Farm, who pointed out that such an expedition for handicapped children would be the equivalent of navigating the Alsek River for Paul and his fellow kayakers.

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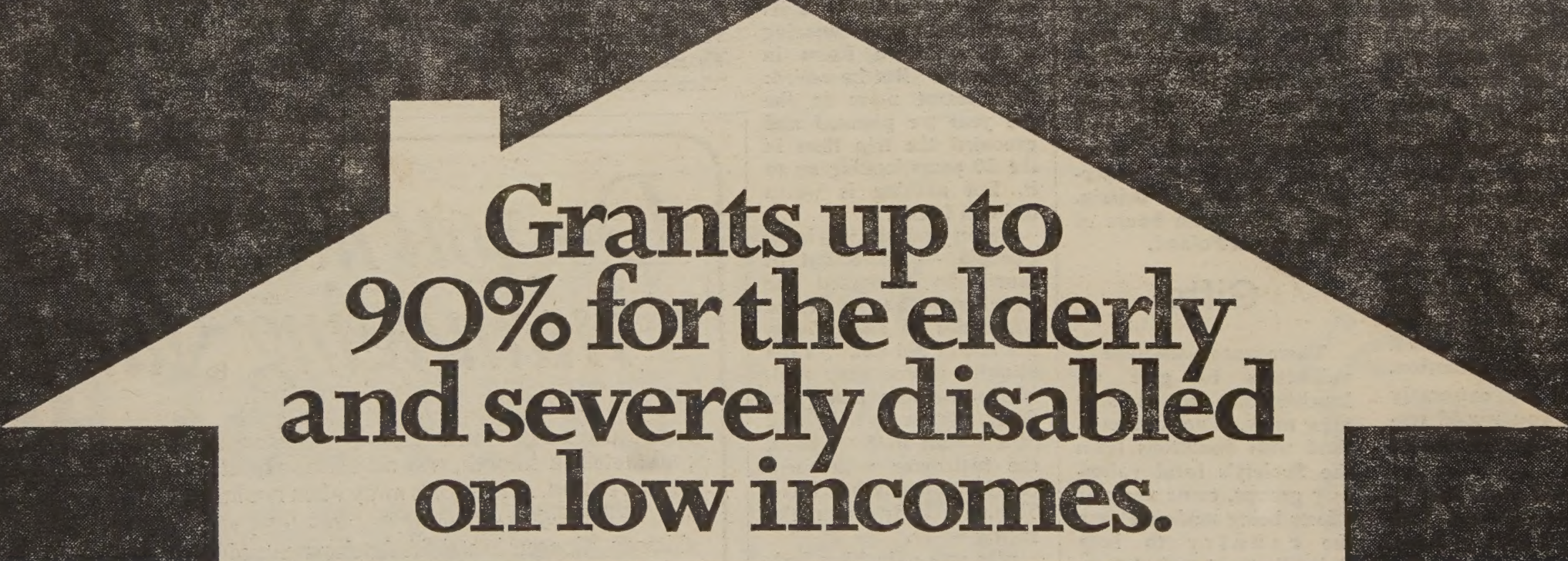
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For other people the amount of grant is less but it could still cover two-thirds of the bill.

You will need to get approval from your local council before starting the work.

**Go to your local council office and ask about a loft insulation grant.**



# Mothers tell of birth the British way

## Facts revealed in major survey

NEXT month see the launch of a book by the Society and the BBC which throws a revelatory light on just what it means to have a baby today. Called "The British Way of Birth" it is published on March 12 by Pan Books, and grew out of the popular TV programme "That's Life."

The programme's presenter, Esther Rantzen, invited viewers to take part

in a survey for the programme and the Society's researcher, Catherine Boyd, was quick to see that many of the questions that would be put tied in with the Society's own "Save a Baby" campaign.

The survey was a huge success — over 10,000 women who were expecting babies wanted to take part

and eventually 6,000 completed the 34-page, 111-question form produced by the Society and the BBC. Lloyds Bank had already offered its computer to the Society as a contribution during the International Year of Disabled People, and this was used by Catherine Boyd and Lea Sellers of the BBC to

analyse the response.

As the results of the survey emerged it became obvious that the material had a wider audience than just those who watched television of a Sunday evening, and it was decided to write the book.

Said Catherine: "I came up with the title 'The British Way of Birth' and

everything fell into place."

The smallest baby to take part in the survey was Amy, who at 11b 10oz was the tiniest infant to be saved in the intensive care unit at Southampton Hospital, and is now a happy, healthy baby. There were triplets, too, born in Norwich, Amy, Eve and Lucy.

Now some of the mothers and babies have been invited to a special publishing party."

## New chapters in life of Dorcas

SINCE leaving the Society's Thomas Delarue School, Dorcas Munday, severely handicapped by cerebral palsy has not been employed — but that doesn't mean she hasn't worked. So successful was her first book, "Opportunity Not Pity" that she has written a follow-up and is acting as saleslady for it, too.

Called "Munday's Child," the title was inspired by her surname and the fact that she was born on a Monday. Now 34, Dorcas, despite being confined to a wheelchair has travelled widely, co-founded a Physically Handicapped and Able-bodied Club in Kettering, and acted as assistant tutor on PHAB courses.

She has also lectured widely on the problems facing the disabled during the International Year of Disabled People and it was the interest generated by IYDP that led to the publication of her latest work. Dorcas explained: "The first book took me seven years to write and this one took me three. I wrote it out on my electric typewriter, a friend read it through and then I sorted out the good stuff from the bad. I decided to publish it myself because there was so much interest shown last year, and by doing it myself I was able

to include pictures and cut the cost. Now I'm concentrating on selling it."

"Munday's Child" is the story of Dorcas' life from the mid-1970s onwards and tells of her travels home and abroad. Her first book was a sell-out of 3,000 copies.

An only child, she lives at home in Wellingborough with her parents, managing to type and paint using her mouth. Another venture into the written word was her contribution to the new Society publication "New Ways of Living," experiences of cerebral palsied people who have found satisfying alternatives to paid employment.

Munday's Child is available from Miss Dorcas Munday, Dale Cottage, 129 Midland Road, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 1NB, price £2 plus 25p postage.

## 'Advocates' win

THE first awards for voluntary projects to enhance the quality of life for disabled people have been presented by Hugh Rossi, Minister for the Disabled, and the Advocacy Alliance, initiated by the Society with four other charities, gained second place.

The award was for £750

for recruiting and training volunteers to work as advocates on a one-to-one basis for residents in long stay hospitals.

It is estimated that of 45,000 people who spend their entire lives in long stay hospitals, about a third never receive visits from friends or relatives. Now the first advocates are being recruited to work at Normansfield Hospital, Teddington, and St Ebba's in Epsom.

THERE'S nothing like a Teddy—children think so (so do many young-at-heart adults), and even massive nationalised undertakings know that if you want to persuade people to "heat electric" the best way is to dress a plump, engaging, bear in a jumper bearing your slogan and put him and his fellows in Electricity Board shops, to attract the oohs and ahs of passers-by.

But the time comes when the bears rebel. The touring life is all very well they say, but a shop window can't compare with their real vocation in life, which is to provide fun and play for children. The people at the Eastern Electricity Shop in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, thought so too, and after their two years of shop touring, the bears (worth £16 each, but who can put a price on a lovable Teddy?) were given a good home. Now Teddies galore live with the children at The Spastics Society's Family Help Unit at Bury St Edmunds, and as you can see from the smiles on the faces of young visitors Keiron Bateman and Beverley Gardener, and indeed, on the varied faces of the Teds, it's a picnic for all concerned.



## Prison visitor Mike

FOR one man at least the International Year of Disabled People has been an overwhelming success and achieved one of its main aims of altering people's attitudes and stimulating integration. For Michael Taylor has been appointed by the Home Office as a prison visitor.

Mike, 27, who lives at the Norwich Hostel, first considered prison visiting when others suggested he had the right attitude and approach to the work. But his early efforts met with rejection. Norwich Prison's Chaplain, the Rev Ken Pratt, admitted that he turned Mike down at first.

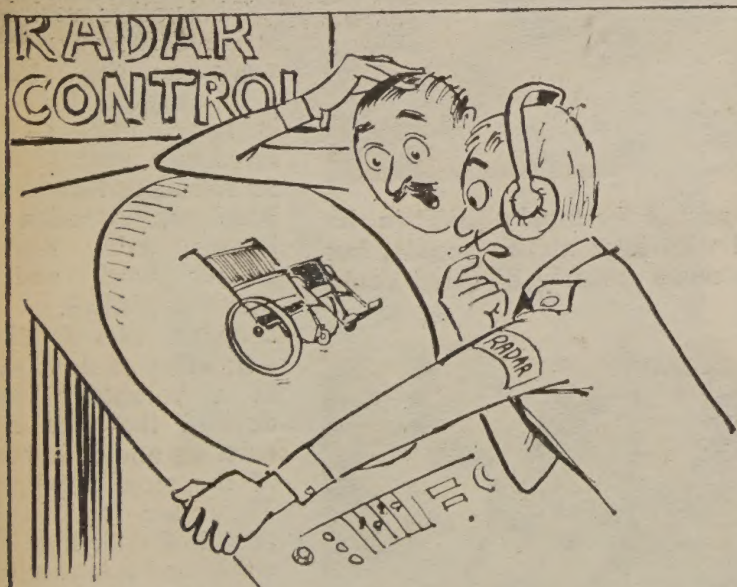
"I reconsidered him because of his tremendous courage in overcoming his disability. He wanted to help prisoners and I feel that because of his personal courage he will be an inspiration."

Mike walks with the aid of sticks and has no speech impediment, and Mrs Jessie Pigeon, the hostel warden, said: "He's thrilled—it's the first time he feels that he has been accepted for what he is—just ordinary. And it's pretty good that as far as anyone knows this is the first time the Home Office has appointed a spastic person as a prison visitor."

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Planned in conjunction with The Spastics Society

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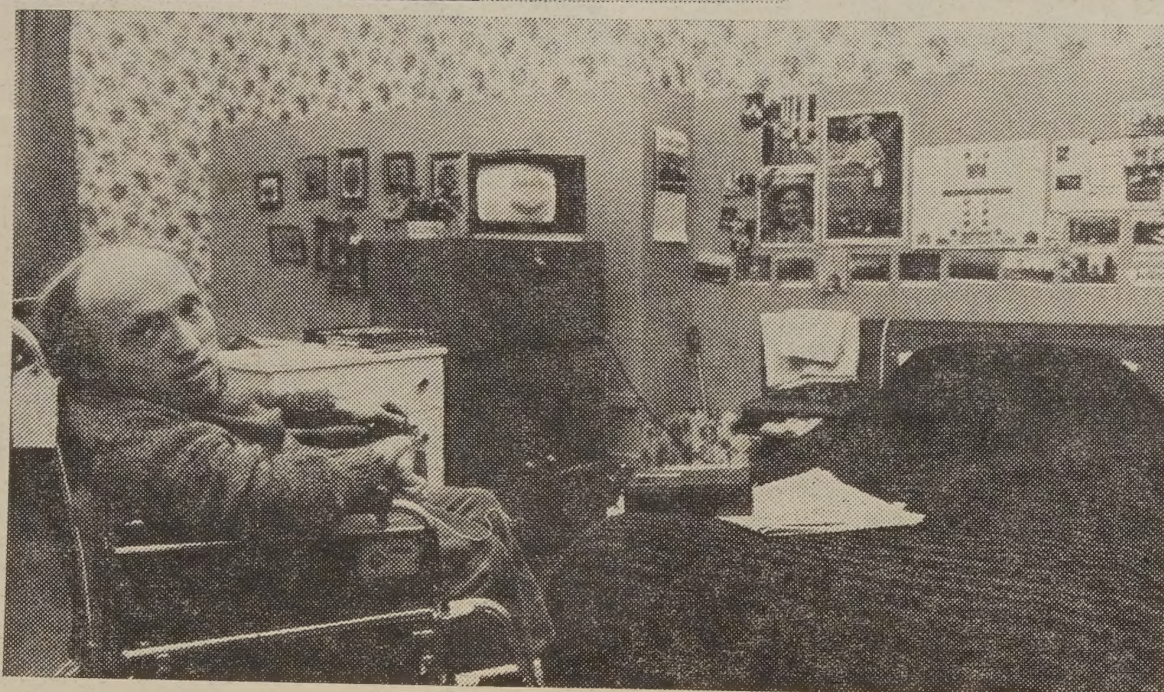
# Spastics News visits a Society community



● ABOVE: Jacques Hall warden Mr Keith Mitchell, with his wife Yvonne stand outside the unique workshop converted from a 16th century barn.



● RIGHT: All the bedrooms at Jacques Hall are bright and cheerful. Here Alan Huffee's bed is surrounded by pictures of the Royal family, and post-cards commemorating his trip to America.



● A GOOD organiser" is how Mr Mitchell described John Taplin. He helps care the grounds, and is currently helping builders erect lighting in the Hall's drive.

## Enthusiasm, never

RESIDENTS of Jacques Hall, set in beautiful Essex countryside on the banks of the River Stour, are living proof that the life of severely disabled people need not be worthless, degrading or just plain boring.

They are part of a community that thrives on adventure, new challenges and ambition. Run by The Spastics Society Jacques

Hall is on the outskirts of the small village of Bradfield and is the smallest of the Society's nine such units in the country. It has 22 adult residents of varying disabilities, some of them confined to wheelchairs.

Warden Mr Keith Mitchell is a firm believer in the option of work, and everyone is given the opportunity of doing something to benefit their small community. Some keep the extensive lawns looking immaculate during the summer, and David Finnegan is already looking forward to when he can once more take charge of the ride-on mower. "The lines might not be absolutely straight, but they do a marvellous job," said Mr Mitchell.

### Barn

Their other work is done inside a superbly designed workshop, converted from a 16th century barn, which is large, light and airy. Here is a hive of activity as residents turn out steel brackets, wooden birdhouses, teddy bear kits, leather work and their latest project, beaded curtains. The daughter of a member of staff, working in a voluntary capacity, devised the idea for the curtains and it is now one of the most popular jobs. They are all justifiably proud of their high quality work, and it is very rare for a resident not to take up the option.

Residents get paid for their work on a points system based on enthusiasm and effort rather than productivity. In this way a severely handicapped person can earn as much as his or her less disabled partners.

Their money is spent in a variety of ways. There are outings to London shows, discos, local clubs, shopping in nearby Colchester where there is a

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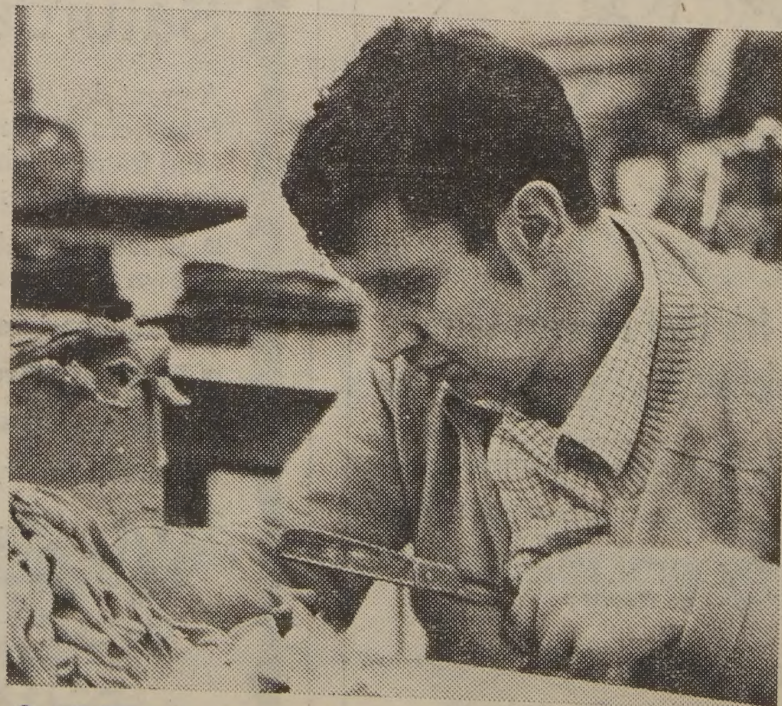
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● JOHN Gillingham enjoys "all the mucky jobs" in the greenhouse. They started with high ability people, but soon found that even the more severely disabled could enjoy working there.



● MICHAEL Collins cutting strips of chamois to make wash leathers.



# which thrives on adventure and challenge



● A GENERAL view of the spacious workshop where Jacques Hall residents enjoy a wide range of activities.

## Effort, ambition—life is booming at Jacques Hall

traffic-free precinct, even to Newmarket races. "We used to go to Ipswich dog races at one time," said Mr Mitchell, "but residents gave that up because they didn't win any money!"

There is also a bar selling beer, sherry and soft drinks, in the recreation room attached to the workshop. This is organised by the residents and a prime example of a cost cutting enterprise is the bar itself — made from old wardrobes by a member of staff. The room has a pool table, pinball machine, stereo, and is a place where the residents can go to entertain or be entertained. Much of the equipment has been provided by the Friends of Jacques Hall,

all local people who work hard at fund-raising throughout the year.

"We are very lucky because we get a tremendous amount of support from Bradfield, which only has a population of 700, and all the surrounding area," said Mr Mitchell. Between 1978 and 1981 the Friends raised £2,000. The Hall also has its own annual fete which is very well supported.

One of Mr Mitchell's innovations in the recreation room is an adult literacy scheme, with not only the residents benefiting but also day attenders coming in to improve their reading and writing skills.

**Out on the River Stour the centre has its own 18ft**

boat, used for fishing and sightseeing. Further afield there are regular exchange visits with a similar unit in Germany, and this year some of the residents are going to a holiday centre in Holland specially designed for the physically handicapped. There have also been holidays in Denmark, America and Canada.

Alan Huffee, who is confined to a wheelchair had an unintentionally prolonged stay in America because on the last day of his holiday there he was admitted to hospital. "It cost thousands of pounds just for one week, but luckily the insurance covered that."

A member of staff acts as escort on these holidays.

There are 31 staff at the Hall. Mr Mitchell explained: "It sounds rather a lot, but of course there has to be 24-hour care so we need that many to cover for time off, holidays, etc, and some are employed as drivers, handymen, and in looking after the grounds."

### Project

Probably the most popular current project is one which the residents asked for and helped set up.

"A group came to me and said that as they lived in the country they wanted to be like country folk, and so they set up the greenhouse project." It started off with one greenhouse, but proved so popular it was rapidly expanded to three, all producing top quality houseplants which are sold, along with their other wares, at fetes, markets, and to passing trade.

A local pub donated £450 to start the project, and now residents take cuttings and pot up a wide variety of plants. Mrs Lily Barfield, a member of staff who was once a market gardener, reckons

Continued on Page 9



● MAKING these walk-through beaded curtains is one of Hilary Kaye's favourite occupations. She is partially sighted and it takes her about four days to make a complete curtain. The daughter of a member of the staff devised the idea for the curtains, and residents thoroughly enjoy making them.



● THE cat may be enjoying a snooze, but Pamela Smith works hard to produce high quality leather purses, one of the popular products from Jacques Hall.



● GEORGINA Cook proudly shows some of her plants raised in the greenhouse, and must also take credit for inspiring this picture feature about Jacques Hall. We visited the centre after her sister telephoned Spastics News to say the whole family would like it to be reported how grateful they were to The Spastics Society for giving Georgina such a happy and fulfilled life there. Before moving to Jacques Hall, Georgina was in a long-stay hospital ward, and, says her sister, "The contrast between Georgina then, and Georgina now, is amazing. Jacques Hall has done wonders."



● DOROTHY Alexander holds one of the teddy bears made from kits produced in the workshop.



● MICHAEL Gagnon with a steel plant holder he has made in the workshop. Residents are paid on a points system based on "enthusiasm and effort."

## Vessa Adjustable Crutch

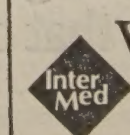
Designed from a concept put forward by a crutch user, Vessa has developed a unique telescopic elbow crutch. This makes stairways, steps and difficult inclines far less of a problem and getting into and out of a seat much easier. Adjusted for height by a simple finger-tip control, the new crutch also incorporates a double action safety mechanism to prevent unexpected adjustment when weight bearing.

Height adjustment lever

Double action safety catch

Telescopic plunger

Prices from £33.35 per pair (plus p & p, VAT where applicable).



Vessa

Please send me full details about Vessa adjustable crutches

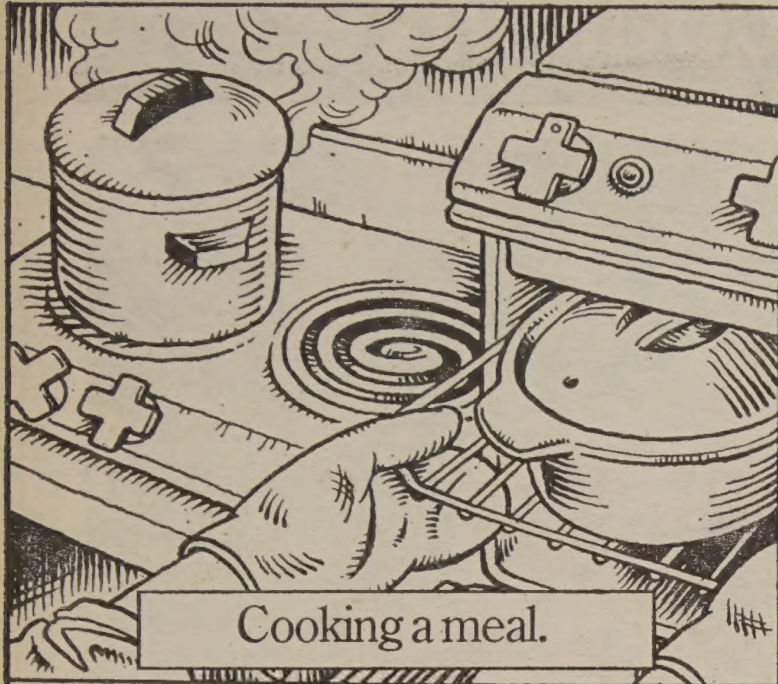
Name

Address

Vessa Limited is part of the InterMed Group, suppliers of quality health-care products worldwide.

Vessa Limited, FREEPOST, Paper Mill Lane, Alton, Hampshire GU34 2PY. Tel: (0420) 83294.





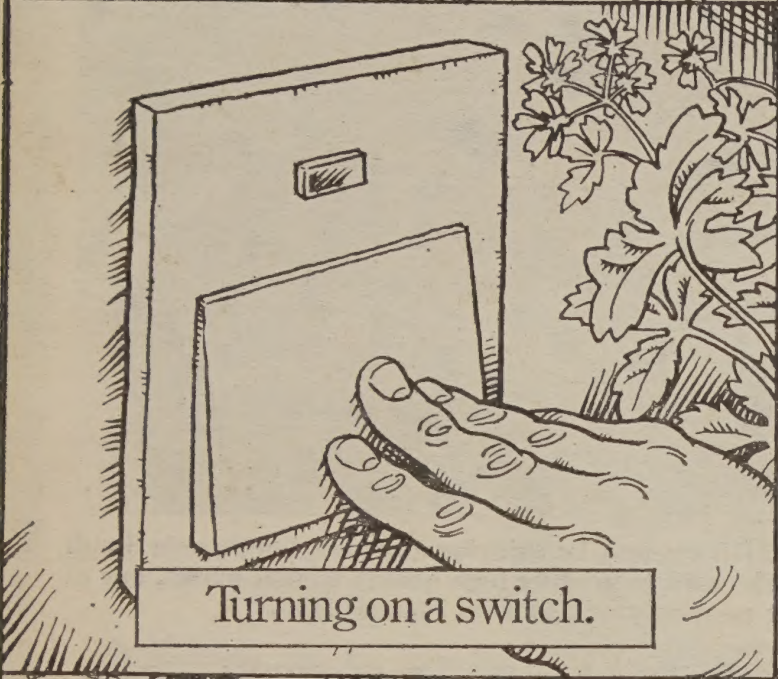
Cooking a meal.



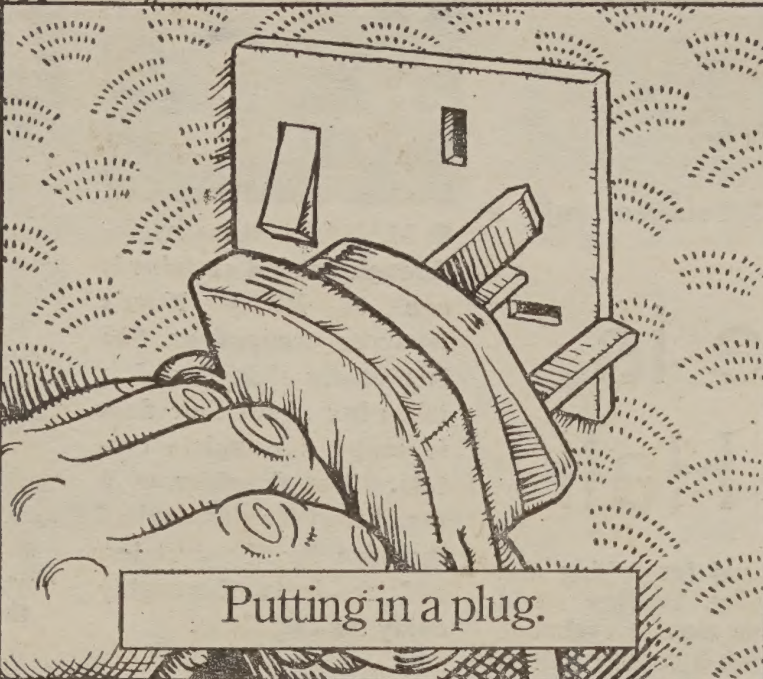
Slicing bread.



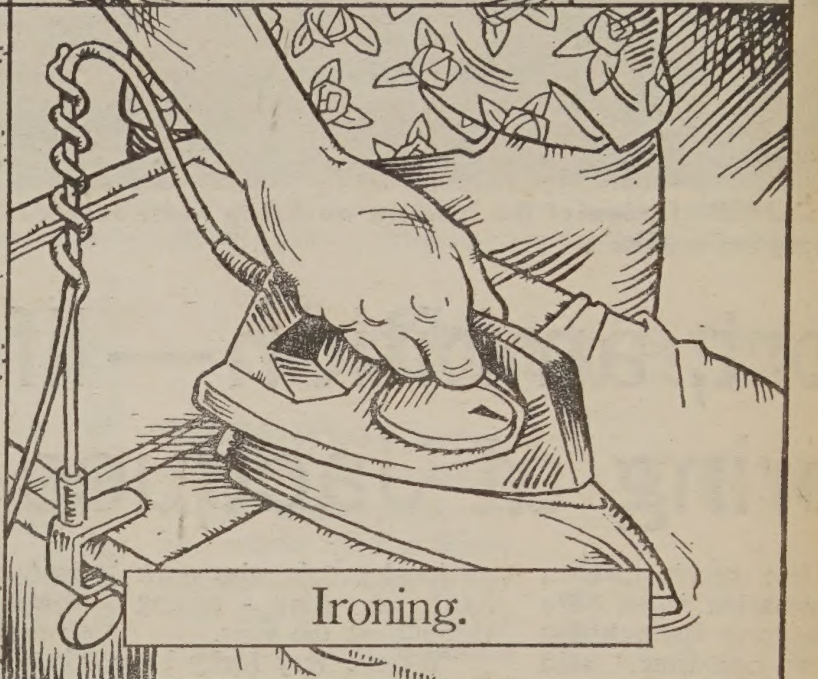
Mixing food.



Turning on a switch.



Putting in a plug.



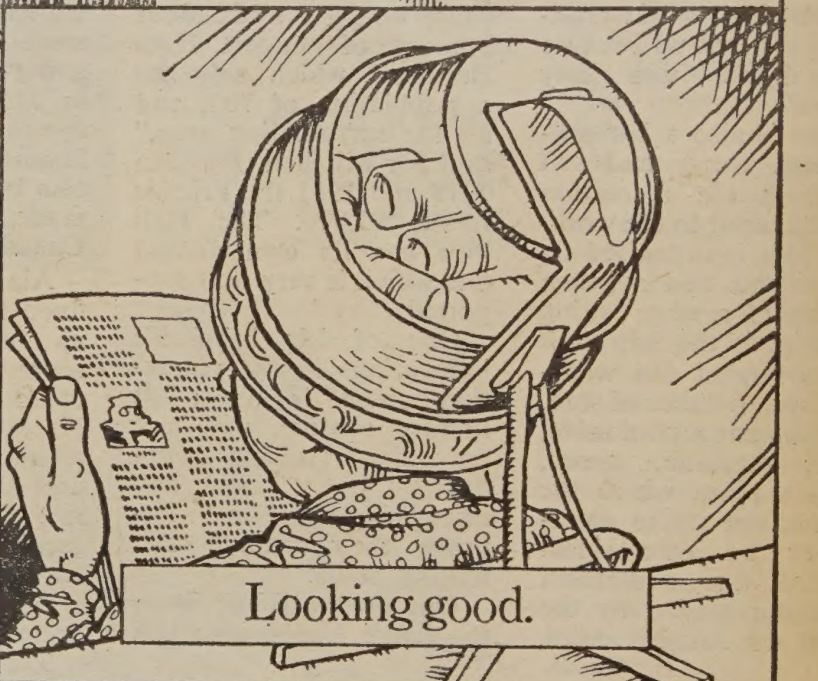
Ironing.



Doing housework.



Cooking chips.



Looking good.

# Is it this easy in your home?

At your Electricity Board, we have a leaflet called "Making Life Easier for Disabled People".

It contains lots of helpful ideas and lists many electrical appliances which can make life easier.

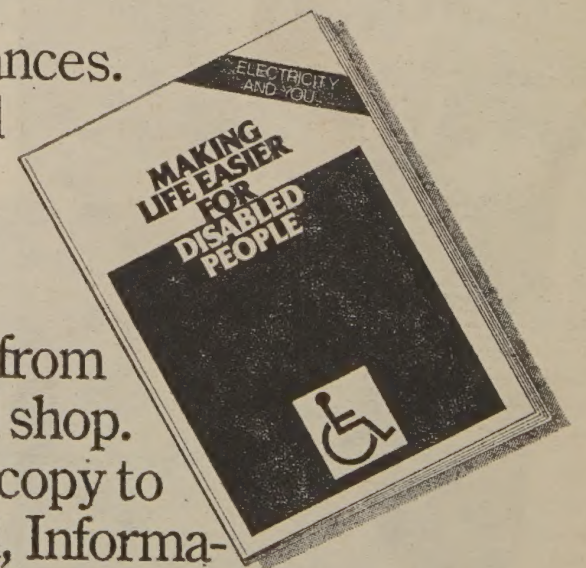
Appliances such as table-top mini cookers. Electric knives which require only a slight pressure to operate. And small, hand-held vacuum cleaners which can be used for dusting, too.

The leaflet also gives details of brailled controls that can be fitted to

certain electrical appliances. And specially designed attachments for plugs and switches which afford easier handling.

The leaflet is free, from your Electricity Board shop. Or you can write for a copy to the Electricity Council, Information Centre, 30 Millbank, London SW1P 4RD.

**THINKELECTRIC**  
The Electricity Council, England and Wales.





## Life at Jacques Hall

Continued from Page 7

they have "the golden touch". Georgina Cook is particularly interested in the project. "They are very good plants and get us a good price. I watch Mrs Barfield and am learning a lot from her. The plants grow bigger and better for me because I talk to them a lot," she said.

Georgina is a prime example of what good units such as Jacques Hall can do. She was previously in a long stay hospital for the mentally handicapped and was a very unhappy person when she first came to the unit seven years ago.

The greenhouse project has been a major influence on her life, and according to Mr Mitchell she has improved out of all recognition.

Mr Mitchell's wife, Yvonne, is the housekeeper and is very much involved in setting up an "aids to daily living" project in a cottage in the grounds. Along with a group of residents she is redecorating the cottage and adapting it for their use. The idea is that eventually some will move in there for the occasional weekend, learning to cope on a budget, shopping, housework, and generally looking after themselves.

This is one of Mr and Mrs Mitchell's main ambitions. They hope that with the aid of such projects some of the residents can eventually make the step into the world outside of Jacques Hall and live more independently. Obviously not all will be able to make that step, but Mr Mitchell is convinced that at least a few will make the effort.

For those unable to leave the Hall he and his dedicated staff are showing just how well spastic people can cope with their disabilities if they are given the chance.

## Make your views heard on TV

CHRISTOPHER Davies wants to "wake up" apathetic disabled people to expect more from life, and he wants to show the able-bodied how their attitudes to the disabled are an additional handicap.

And now he has his chance to do both — on TV. Chris, severely handicapped but an academic wizard who is believed to

be the only disabled student who received a distinction for every course towards his Open University degree — is making a programme for the BBC TV "Open Door" series. Filming starts in Chris's home town of Birkenhead this month, entitled "Attitude — the Second Handicap," will be and the programme,

shown on March 20.

A vital part of the programme will be a studio discussion to follow the film, and this will be recorded on March 13, at 2 pm, in the TV Centre in London. And it is here that Christopher Davies wants your help.

He wants as many disabled people as possible to be in the audience to

join in a discussion on the attitudes of the able-bodied towards disabled people when it comes to education, employment, social, personal and sexual relationships.

Mr Davies asked Spastics News to emphasise that speech is not vital to take part.

He is anxious to hear from any disabled people

who would be willing to attend, but particularly keen on making contact with ex-students who were with him at The Spastics Society's Thomas Delarue School, between 1958 and 1963, and at Oakwood in 1970 and 1971.

Contact Christopher Davies, c/o "Open Door," BBC TV Centre, Wood Lane, London W12.

## Red Devils dropped in to give Edward a lift

THE spectacular achievements of the Red Devils have led to a dramatic difference in the life of 14-year-old spastic boy Edward Wong of Brent.

Edward, a pupil at Charlton Park School, London, is very severely handicapped, and is now

too heavy and awkward for his mother to manage. Her local social services department gave her a hoist but she could not find a suitable harness.

A chance visit to a show where the famous Army paratroop team were giving a display gave her an idea. For she could see that the type of harness

they used would be ideal for her son — and when she contacted them they were only too pleased to help.

Mrs Wong just wanted information about the harness — the Red Devils wanted to do more than that.

The Wong family, Mr Wong comes from Singa-

pore and Mrs Wong from Spain, and Edward were all invited to the Red Devils headquarters at Aldershot and were fêted for the day.

A few weeks later a sergeant major arrived at the

Wong home to make a special delivery of the harness and Edward is enjoying it to the full.

"He loves it very much and bounces happily to music. It is a very good thing," said his mother.



## Gift from school

THE Douglas Arter Centre at Odstock Hospital, Salisbury, will be able to buy a slide projector, screen and cassette tapes after a cheque presentation by pupils of Downton Primary School. The children had raised the money through a special International Year of Disabled People service and sponsored swim on the centre's behalf.

Sophie Corrigan from the school handed over the cheque for £186 to Tessa Bartlett, a resident at the centre watched by residents, the warden, John Hardwicke, Mrs Joyce Smith, the Society's Chairman, teachers from the school and centre staff.

Picture: Salisbury Journal.



## "HELP FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED"

British Gas offers a wide range of help to those who need it most, particularly the elderly and disabled.

If you are elderly or disabled, here are some of the ways in which we can make life easier for you. If you know somebody who might benefit from these services, please pass the information to them.

### FREE GAS SAFETY CHECKS

Make sure that your gas appliances are working safely and efficiently by having them serviced. And make sure that servicing is only done by competent people.

A free gas safety check on your gas appliances and installations is available if: You are 65 or over and you live alone; You are a registered handicapped person of any age and you live alone.

This free check includes any necessary adjustments as well as materials up to the cost of £2.50 (including VAT). You might have to pay for any additional work that needs to be done.

Gas fires, water heaters and central heating systems all need servicing from time to time. All customers can be assured that their appliances are operating safely and efficiently if they have them serviced regularly.

You should also bear in mind that checking and making safe a suspected gas leak is FREE for all customers. Simple gas leak repairs will also usually be free. If you suspect a gas leak at home or in the street, report it at once. The phone is quickest — call the emergency number for your area, under "GAS" in the local telephone directory.

### AIDS FOR THE DISABLED

Modern gas appliances are much easier for disabled people to use. Gas built-in ovens and hot-plates can be placed at a convenient height in the kitchen for people in wheelchairs or for people who find it difficult to bend down or reach up when they are cooking. Most cookers and fires now have automatic spark ignition and need no matches to light them.

If you have a hand disability, you might find the controls on your cooker or gas fire difficult to operate. British Gas has devised a range of special adaptors

which should make life easier. There are four types of tap handles specially designed for cookers, each of which will fit many different models, and tap adaptors for many gas fires.

There is a nominal standard charge of £2 (plus VAT) per appliance for supplying and fitting adaptors to a new or existing appliance.

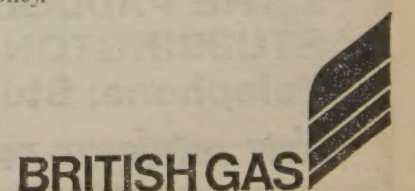
If you know someone who is blind or has failing sight, please tell them about braille controls for cookers and central heating. The clock controls which switch central heating on and off can be brailled. Special braille or studded oven thermostat dials are available for most gas cookers, together with braille cooking charts.

### ASK US TO HELP YOU

British Gas has a team of Home Service Advisers, who will call on disabled people at home and provide free advice on the use of gas. They can provide information about special adaptors and handles and advise on the choice of suitable appliances.

If you would like to contact the Home Service Advisers or to enquire about free gas safety checks, regular servicing for appliances or aids for the disabled, visit your local gas showroom or telephone the gas service centre (the phone number is under "GAS" in the local directory).

The showroom can also tell you about easier ways to pay your gas bills, and how to get help if there is real hardship — ask for the Code of Practice, "Electricity and gas bills for your home." It can also provide advice on energy conservation, helping you to save gas and save money.



## Your ads and announcements

**SENIOR nurse required at Colwall Court Hotel for Handicapped Children, Pages Avenue, Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex. SRN/SEN. Seasonal/permanent. Residential—own accommodation. Shift work — including some weekends. Must be on call. Salary — according to qualifications and experience. Grade 1 (7-11/14 + QA £246 pa. Starting date — February/March 1982.**

**CARS for sale:** Renault 4 specially converted to take assembled wheelchair and occupant plus driver and front passenger. Raised roof with forward and side vision. Only done 300 miles from new. £3,300. — Harold Lines Ltd, Crawley Road, Horsham, Sussex. Tel Horsham 61146.

**SUNNY residential hostel overlooking River Thames, Chelsea, London, near Battersea Park, available for letting to groups of six children age up to 10 and 2-3 helpers. Central heating, hot and cold water, colour TV.**

**Resident housekeeper and cleaning help.**

Available week beginning April 19, 1982, and a week in August.

Cost £550 per week full board.

Inquiries to The Superintendent, Cheyne Centre, 61 Cheyne Walk, SW3. Tel 01-352 8434.

**FOR sale:** Malden Raleigh Special with electronic joystick on six wheel chassis. Forward and reverse movement includes battery charger. Good condition, price £400 ono. Contact: 49 Newlands Avenue, Melton Park, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 5PH, or ring Newcastle 363021.

**FOR sale:** Braune three-wheeler, blue, seven years old, new battery but needs a couple of wires attended to. Price £150 ono. Contact: D. Porter, 12 St Augustine's Close, Broomhouse, Herts.

**DISABLED girl would like to meet/write to young man 29 to 35 years. I live in New Barnet, Herts. Interests include reading, listening to music, films, table tennis**

and swimming.

Reply to Box 104, Spastics News.

**INTERNATIONAL Cerebral Palsy Society in conjunction with Centre on Environment for the Handicapped, International Seminar — "Environment and Handicapped People" at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, England, March 22-26, 1982.**

Participation is limited to 100 people and the language of the meeting will be English. The total cost including registration fee, accommodation and meals will be £105. For members of the CEH or ICPS it will be £95.

Details from: Mrs Anita Loring, International Cerebral Palsy Society, 5a Netherhall Gardens, London NW3 5RN, England. Telephone 01-794 9761.

**HOLIDAY caravan adapted for use by the handicapped at Sandford Park, Nr Wareham, Dorset. Six berth, TV, shower, fridge and main drainage. Inquiries to Mrs W. Stephenson, 2 Ashling Close, Bournemouth, Dorset, or phone 0202 514615.**



## No jobs —but full lives

"NEW Ways of Living," a new booklet published by The Spastics Society, tells of the experiences of spastic people who have found satisfying alternatives to paid employment.

In a time of high unemployment the 14 contributors have used their diverse talents to enrich their lives and benefit society. They have taken on voluntary work, fostering, weaving, lecturing, photography, gardening, fund raising, teaching and writing.

These experiences transcend the boundaries of disability. Many retired or unemployed people in search of fulfilment will find this booklet a useful source of practical advice, information and contacts.

As a contributor, Marjorie Chappell, says: "Take disability as a challenge; never be told what you can or cannot do — have a go and find a way... I found a new source of satisfaction at 50, so it is never too late to begin a new interest."

### Her idea

"New Ways of Living" is the result of an idea by Margaret Morgan, The Spastics Society's Controller of Personal Social Services. Most of the contributors are personally known to Margaret Morgan, and she has watched many of them cope with the difficult times of adjustment after leaving school, even more difficult for disabled people during a recession. However, the contributors prove that they have found an alternative path to self-fulfilment.

"New Ways of Living," edited by Sue Kendall, 28 pages. Price £1 plus 25p postage and packing from The Spastics Society, Family Services and Assessment Centre, 16 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 5HQ. Telephone 01-387 9571.

'The State has the strength and the means to force you to shut up'

# The dissident disabled of Russia

**YURI Kiselev, Valery Fefelov and Faizulla Khusainov are names that could rank alongside those of the Sakharovs and Anatole Scharansky, for they are the voice of the dissident disabled in Russia today.**

Their "crime" was to found the **Action Group to Defend the Rights of the Disabled**. Its aims were simple — to collect and publish information on the situation of disabled people in the USSR, petition for improvements in social security, to seek ties with international organisations for the disabled, and produce information bulletins in "which all our actions and their results will be described."

As a result, it is claimed in reports from Russia, Yuri Kiselev no longer receives contracts for design work, the cottage he built with the help of friends was threatened with demolition by the authorities — until it was burned down recently in mysterious circumstances. During the 1980 Moscow Olympics he was banned from driving his car, which was subsequently damaged, and his tools and spare parts were taken from his garage and put on a rubbish tip.

### Searched

His home, which he has been told he may have to share, has been repeatedly searched and letters from other disabled people confiscated. Following one such search Kiselev was beaten up in the doorway of his home.

Valery Fefelov has been banned from driving his

invalid car, repeatedly visited by officials and members of the KGB, and threatened with arrest and imprisonment in a labour camp if he continues his activities with the Action Group.

His wife Olga, has been visited by officials urging her to cease her activities, threatened with deprivation of her parental rights over her two children by her first marriage, and warned that criminal proceedings will be instituted against her.

Faizulla Khusainov has been virtually cut off from other members of the Group through interference with post and telephone — and his invalid carriage has been confiscated.

In an open letter they say: "If any of us should wish to remind people of our human dignity and attempt to insist on our widely proclaimed rights, not only will we be persecuted but also our families and friends, all those helping in our daily life."

Constantly harassed by the KGB and threatened with imprisonment, Kiselev, Fefelov and Khusainov are nevertheless continuing their efforts, hoping to encourage other disabled people to join in their campaign for the formation of a society for disabled people in the USSR.

The Soviet Government does not publish separate statistics for disabled people — they are grouped with elderly people as pensioners.

In fact much of what is known about the plight of the disabled people of

Russia is due to the efforts of the Action Group, but much still remains obscure. It is known that there are societies for blind and deaf — but these are offshoots of the State. Attempts in 1927, 1956 and 1973 to found any kind of voluntary movement on behalf of the handicapped were sooner or later crushed.

When Yuri Kiselev first had the idea of self-help group in early 1978 he was left in no doubt about the problems he faced by one of the founder-members of the 1973 initiative.

She warned him that the All-Union Society for the Disabled had never operated in practice and that such pressure had been exerted on another colleague he had withdrawn into himself. This was confirmed by the comment of the Deputy Minister for Social Security who told the Action Group: "There was someone in Ivanovo who wanted to organise a society for the disabled. If you knew what they did to him, you wouldn't envy him."

### Poverty

In their open letter the Group claims that the disabled in Russia "exist on the brink of poverty. They are deprived of the right to education, and employment, to cultural events, to independent movement and deserved rest, to a good diet, medical treatment, housing, clothing, sporting events — in short to physical and psychological rehabilitation."

Public transport is not equipped to handle disabled people who cannot in any case afford taxis. Wheelchairs and motorised vehicles are of poor quality, unreliable and often unsafe. In recent years the price of petrol, taxis, car repairs and spare

parts had more than doubled, while pensions and benefits have remained the same.

Unless they are classed as war disabled, the handicapped have to queue, often for hours, for food just as anyone else. Pensions for the most severely disabled who have worked start at 75 roubles a month (£97.88) and for those who have not, 26 roubles (£19.90).

The average weekly wage in the Soviet Union is 30 roubles roughly 22.93.

The Moscow Helsinki Group has referred to the disability pensions as "a minimum bordering on pauperism" and that "the levels of pensions for some categories are so low that to talk of social security is a nonsense".

There are no housing privileges for the disabled or special housing designed for them — they cannot turn their wheelchairs in most halls or corridors or enter the lavatory or bathroom. Wheelchairs do not fit into lifts, so they must always be carried on stairs.

There are very few disabled in special homes — those that exist are reported to be very bad and described as "Living graves, a menagerie" by one inmate. Care is poor, food bad, heating inadequate, disabled people "hang themselves, drown themselves".

The attitude of the authorities to the Group was summed by the Vice President of the Moscow Social Security, Fyodorov, who is alleged to have told it: "The State has the strength and the means to force you to shut up."

● Dutch sympathisers have formed the **Bukovsky Foundation to help the Action Group**, and have already begun an assistance programme. Money, parcels and wheelchairs are being sent to the USSR, and the Foundation can be contacted via Postbus dam, Holland.

## A chair for the air...

A REVOLUTIONARY new chair from Newton Aids Ltd is the only British chair being considered by an international committee "Access to the Skies" set up by major airlines to establish the most suitable wheelchair for use in aircraft.

The chair comfortably seats a "beamy" person yet is narrow enough to pass down the gangway of a plane or corridor of a train. Folded, it measures 4½ in wide, and stows on luggage racks or under seats.

### Patent

Newton Aids is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Society which is applying for a patent on the "Travel Chair."

Large self-propelling wheels can be clipped on by a disabled person sitting in it, and the chair costs £100 plus £30 for the special wheels.

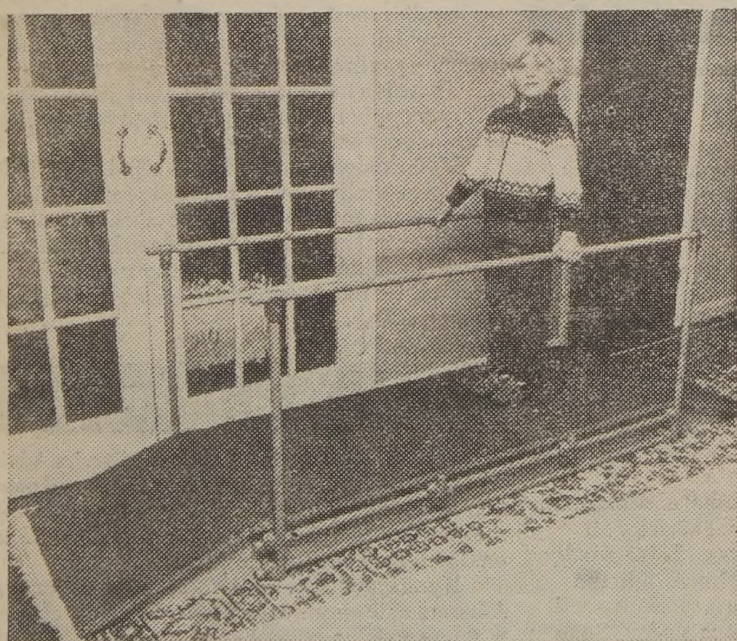
Further details from **Peter Dabell, Newton Aids Ltd, Unit 4, Dolphin Industrial Estate, Southampton Road, Salisbury, Wilts.**

## Mr Crosby's progress

MR J. W. Crosby, who was responsible for planning the unit for cerebral palsied people at Sharncliffe Occupation Centre, now run by the Leeds authority, is making good progress after a cerebral haemorrhage in December.

Honorary Treasurer of the North East Regional Committee, Mr Crosby was appointed honorary treasurer to the Leeds and District Spastics Society at its inception, a post he held for many years before his appointment to the North East Regional Council as it was then known.

He has worked indefatigably to raise money for the provision of the Leeds Work Centre in Osmondthorpe Lane, and it was for his untiring efforts on behalf of cerebral palsied people that he was awarded the MBE.



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## Motoring by John Byworth Family conversion

THE transporting of handicapped people who cannot easily leave their wheelchairs has puzzled mechanical engineers for years, and one only has to look at the local authority examples, to see how far they are from the luxury coaches used for schools. When it comes to the family car most disabled adults have to be man-handled into the back seat, requiring considerable strength from parents and friends and tolerance from the person involved, or they just don't go out.

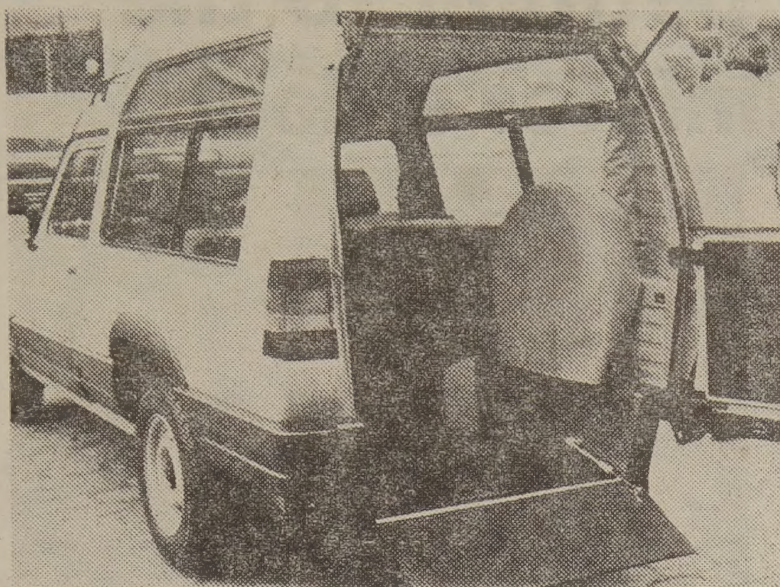
Mr Samford, of North London, whose son Nicholas is a large, healthy, 32-year-old, was finding this process harder each time, but rather than leave Nicholas at home, he sought the answer, by having an ordinary car converted to take the wheelchair, with the occupant still seated.

### Utility

The car he chose was the Matra Rancho which Talbot Cars introduced a few years ago as a challenge to the Range Rover. It is a luxurious utility vehicle for both on and off road uses, and has a conventional front half with a 1500cc Simca engine, driving the front wheels through a four-speed gearbox, thus giving the performance of a normal modern car.

The back half, however, is fibreglass with large windows which make it ideal for both its original design function, and also allows for conversion — without any outside modifications — making it inconspicuous and not the obvious carriage of a disabled person.

The car was purchased by the local dealer, in France, and then transferred to Smulders Systems Ltd in Holland where the interior was removed and the rear floor lowered. A short ramp has also been fitted, and the whole thing is made to work by a hydraulic system which allows the back to be



lowered, so the wheelchair enters up a gentle slope.

The rear seats have been modified but are still in position, so the car can also be used as a four-seater when not carrying a wheelchair. The fuel tank and spare wheel, which were removed when the floor was lowered, have been re-positioned at the side with matching covering.

This conversion was expensive but the result is quite spectacular and gives Mr Samford a car which can be fully utilised by the whole family. When compared with the purchase of a large uneconomical van with a tail lift added, it is not such a forbidding prospect and if one takes fuel economy into the costing over a five year period, I am sure the original high purchase price would be justified.

**Technical information:** 1500cc five bearing engine, giving 80 bhp, fitted with electronic ignition, giving 28.8 mpg in urban driving and 35.3 mpg at 56 mph.

**Service intervals** are every 10,000 miles, at approx £100 per service, with 5,000 mile oil changes at approx £20.

As this vehicle was purchased in France and the conversion was done in Holland, I cannot give an exact price due to the fluctuating exchange rate, but the standard Rancho is approx £6,000 plus tax plus delivery, with the conversion price of approx £2,500.

The car was purchased from: Warwick Wright Limited, Holloway Road, London.

## Concession on trikes

AN overlap concession has been granted by the Department of Health and Social Security to users of the invalid three-wheeler trike who have not yet passed the test for a car. New legislation will allow them to retain their trike, and still receive the mobility allowance while learning to drive a car or similar vehicle. The mobility allowance can be used to purchase a vehicle either privately or through Motability.

Any inquiries should be addressed to either the DHSS, Disablement Services Branch 6A, Government Buildings, Warbreck Hill Road, Blackpool, Lancs FY2 0UZ, for England and Wales or Scottish Home and Health Department, St Andrews House, Edinburgh EH1 3DE.

## Goodbye after 17 years

ALTHOUGH I have always managed to keep a couple of jumps ahead of my age, time has inevitably caught up with me. I am now retired!

During my time of over 17 years with the Society it has been my privilege to meet very many wonderful people, particularly amongst the handicapped. I have memories of enduring friend-

## LETTERS

ships with those in the regions who form the backbone of the Society's strength and endeavours — the voluntary local group members. Their devotion to the "cause" never ceases to amaze me and command my utmost respect.

My gratitude also goes to

## We meant COUNTING!

I READ with interest the story in the January Spastics News about Mrs Doris Snowdon, of Stockport, who has done such a marvellous job counting all the cash collected in the region. When this runs into thousands of pounds in small change it is a tedious job which nobody likes — so all praise to her. But I was amused at the headline "COURTING QUEEN." Should an "R" have been an "N."

Yes! Mrs Snowdon is indeed the COUNTING QUEEN. Printers' error, I'm afraid, and fortunately, Mrs Snowdon took it all in good part. — Editor.



MR and Mrs Dobson at their retirement party.

my colleagues on the staff at headquarters, regional offices and other units with whom I have worked. Much has been learned from them and from those who, through the years, have moved on to new fields of interest. I remember, too, those exciting times shared with the Chairman, directors and staff of Top Ten Promotions Ltd; they were good days!

These then, have been happy and rewarding years. My wife and I have been the

recipients of so much kindness and affection; we cherish every memory. For us it is the closure of one chapter. We now turn the page to the bonus years of new adventures and service. We wish all our friends everywhere, happiness in the coming days.

**ARTHUR A. DOBSON,**  
Homework Manager,  
Chingford,  
London E4.

## Student awards for handicapped

THE Earl of Snowdon would be very grateful if you could draw the attention of your readers to the availability of the Snowdon Award Bursaries for Physically Handicapped Students, 1982.

The award scheme was launched last year to coincide with the International Year of Disabled People. Its initial funds stemmed from reproduction rights from official photographs Lord Snowdon had taken of various members of the Royal Family. These amounted to some £14,000 but now, thanks to the help of many generous people (including a substantial donation from Prince Philip) the capital sum, the income from which provides the awards, now stands at very nearly £80,000 with more under promise in the years ahead.

The awards are made on the recommendation of a specially appointed panel of physically disabled students aged between 17 and 25

(although slightly older applicants may be considered under special circumstances) for further education or training in a branch of the sciences or arts which must take place in the United Kingdom. Each bursary is for a period of one or two years and bursaries do not exceed £1,000 a year in value.

As examples of the type of young people who are intended to benefit, last year's winners included a 17 year old suffering from spastic diplegia which affects his balance and ability to walk more than a short distance. He was awarded a part bursary of £500 to help provide equipment and transportation to enable him to take a Draughtsman's Technical Education Certificate.

The closing date for applications is May 31, 1982. Application forms and further information are available from the Secretary of the Snowdon Award Scheme at the administering charity's head office: "Action Research" — The National Fund for Research into Crippling Diseases, Vincent House, Springfield Road, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 2PN. Telephone Horsham (0403) 64101.

**ERIC S. STONEFIELD,**  
Secretary to the  
Snowdon Award Scheme.

## A mother's story

FOR parents learning for the first time the sad news that their child is handicapped the future seems blighted and bleak. Mrs Ellie Smith of Kingsburn Gardens, Dundee, knows all about the heartbreak they face but she also knows that there can be compensations. In a moving letter to a Scottish paper she gives a message of real hope and understanding to those families coming to terms with the tragedy of disability in their midst.

"My husband Albert and myself are the parents of a son suffering from cerebral palsy and practically blind. We have had our joys and our heart-aches and we're still struggling along. Where there is life there is hope.

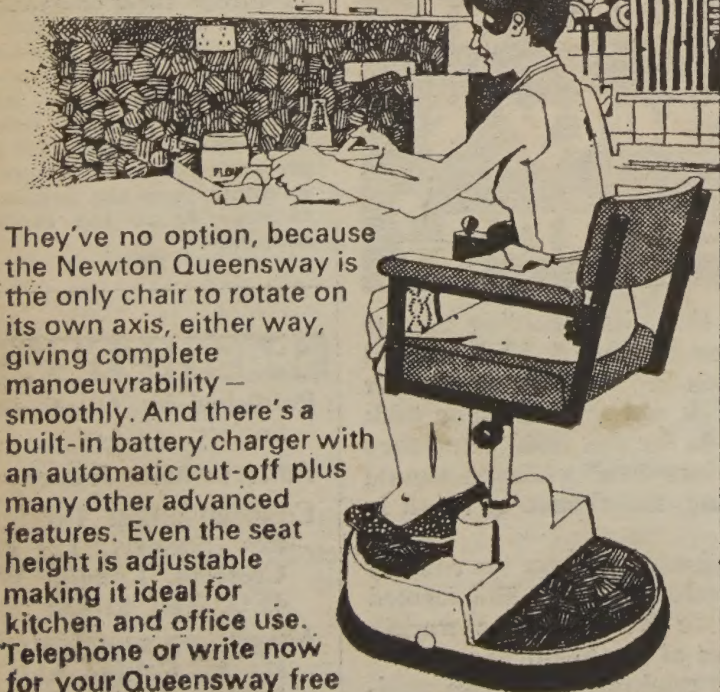
"Jimmy, our first child, was born in September 1944, when I was just 19 and my husband was away at sea. My parents, my sister and brother helped me get through the hell of visits to hospital, and without them I don't think I could have managed at first.

"Then when Jimmy's two sisters came along and grew older they helped. They loved their big brother then, and still do. So do their children, and Jimmy has a happy life. Jimmy knows nothing apart from pain.

"A year ago my husband and I were involved in setting up the Dundee Country and Western Club. Jimmy is a lover of Country and Western music and it does a tremendous amount for him. Jimmy donates all the things he makes during therapy work to help raise

money for the handicapped. He also likes to play his guitar and sing, and goes to old people's homes and the like to entertain. He just likes to make others happy and is a real example to many more fortunate than himself."

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# Waging the battle for VAT relief

● With a 'cruel' advert campaign

● With a petition to the Prime Minister's door

● With support of MPs



THE Spastics Society's forthright advertising campaign pressing for relief from the burden of VAT did not beat about the bush. With a picture of a VAT man depicted as a "robber," and words telling how the Society was "crippled" by paying out £300,000 a year in VAT, it was intended to make a dramatic impact. It pleased some, who praised it for its outspoken courage, but the Society had also received letters and telephone calls protesting at the "cruel" way the picture depicted tax officials "who after all are only administering the law of the country." Naturally enough, the protests have come from VAT, inspectors and their wives, hurt at the "criminal image."

The Society is unrepentant. Praise for the "brave campaign" have outweighed the protests, and with £300,000 a year at stake the Society was in no mood to pull its punches.

THE long-fought battle urging the Government to relieve charities of the crushing burden of Value Added Tax was taken a step further when the VAT Reform Group, led by the Society, delivered an avalanche of signatures to the doorstep of 10 Downing Street.

All over the country people had added their signatures to a petition urging relief from a tax which costs the Society £300,000 a year, while local authorities — often performing the same service — are able to recover their VAT.

Initiative for the petition came from the St Austell and District Spastics Group, whose secretary Mrs Amorel Williams explained that members had decided to collect signatures as their contribution to the International Year of Disabled People.

Such was the support, that even after the closing date, by which time 25,000 signatures had been amassed, people were still asking for petition forms to sign.

Signatures were collected by a number of organisations such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind, and the National Children's Homes, and the Society's senior regional officer in the North West,



Nigel Smith, brought over 7,000 down to London.

More support came from Save the Children Fund, Royal Mencap, Help the Aged, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf and Dr Barnardo's. All were represented as the petition party gathered at the barriers in Downing Street.

Gordon Faddy, a 31-year-old disabled lecturer at the Society's Churchtown Farm Field Studies Centre, Lanlivery, carried a replica of a beer vat to highlight the issue and presenting the petition with him was Tim Yeo, the Society's Director, Mrs Williams, Angela Rowe, an 11-year-old pupil at the RNIB school, Chorleywood, and Suzann Clark, a voluntary helper from Help the Aged.

Now the VAT Reform

● NIGEL Smith hands over a mammoth contribution of 7,000 signatures to Gordon Faddy for delivery to the door of No 10, accompanied by Angela Rowe, and Mrs Amorel Williams, secretary of the St Austell Group (see story left).

Group waits to hear the Prime Minister's response to the petition while planning the next move in the campaign to abolish VAT for charities.

● As the group made their way through the heavy security to No 10, the barriers were pulled aside and through them swept, in his official limousine, the one man, who, at a stroke, could lift the VAT burden — Sir Geoffrey Howe, Chancellor of the Exchequer!

MANY MPs are now supporting charities in their fight for VAT relief, and it is hoped that the groundswell of opinion in Parliament may influence the Budget in March.

An Early Day Motion calling on the government to grant relief has been tabled in the House of Commons. Sponsored by MPs from all parties, it was tabled after a reception organised by the VAT Reform Group was held in the House on January 26.

The MPs present were told by The Spastics Society and the seven other leading charities which make up the Group, that irrecoverable VAT is threatening the valuable services which the charities provide.

## Reception

The reception was sponsored by John Hannam, MP, Secretary of the All Party Disablement Group, and David Ennals, MP, former Secretary of State for Social Services, who pledged their support for the VAT campaign. Mr Hannam reported on a meeting he had with Sir Geoffrey Howe the day before, when the Chancellor had expressed sympathy with their case.

The Early Day Motion has been tabled in an attempt to gain more support from MPs, especially government members, before the Budget statement on March 9. It proposes three options for giving relief from VAT for charities and was quickly signed by 60 MPs, many of them Tories.

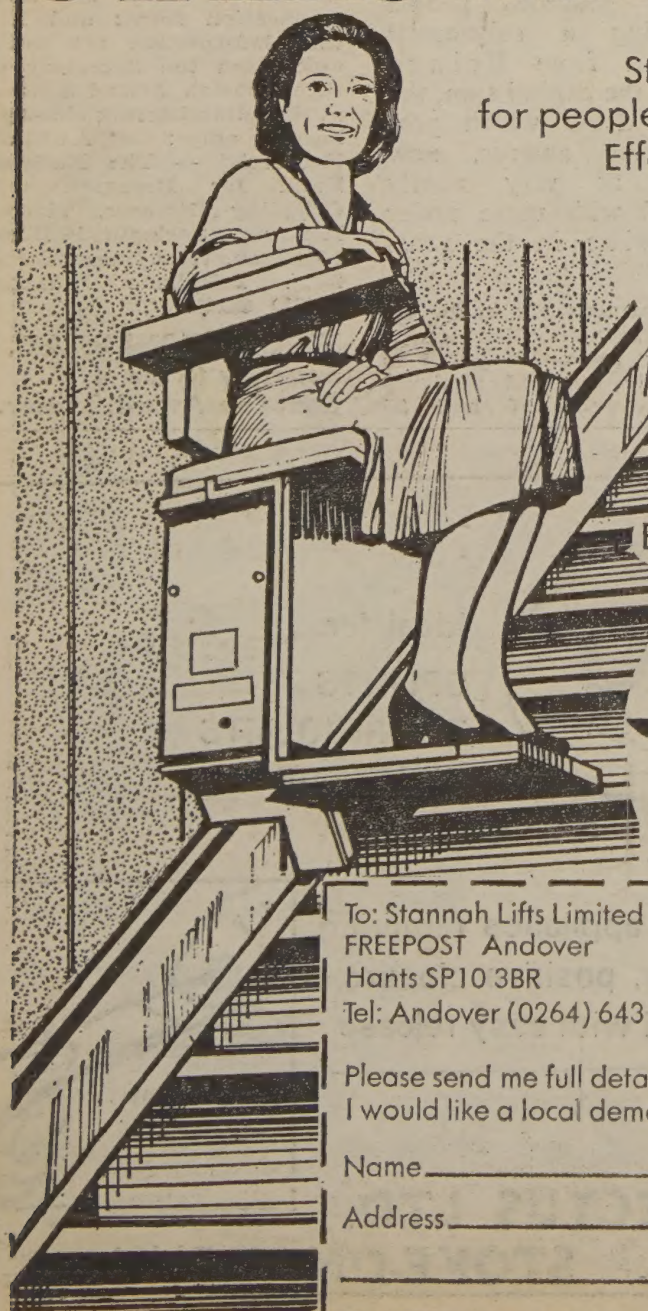
Tim Yeo, Director of The Spastics Society and Chairman of the VAT Reform Group, reminded the MPs at the reception:

"An estimated one in 10 people in this country are involved in voluntary work of some kind. To grant VAT relief to charities is one way of appealing to a large number of voters."

The eight charities will ask their local groups to encourage their constituency MPs to sign the Motion.

● An Early Day Motion is a means which MPs use to gather support on issues within Parliament. If enough MPs sign an EDM this puts pressure on the Government to allow time for debate, or to concede to the Motion's demands.

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## Were YOU at the Society's first meeting?

THE parents who attended that first meeting at the Ambassadors Hotel, London, on January 5, 1952, arrived in a mood of angry desperation for the futures of their spastic children. They were sick and tired of being told: "There is nothing anyone can do for this child," and they were determined that those "forgotten" children should have schools, treatment, training, the chance of a job in the future.

But before they left for their homes all over the country those parents had started a revolution. They had formed a national Society which was to grow into the world's leading organisation for the care of the handicapped.

Now The Spastics Society is celebrating its 30th anniversary and Spastics News wants to find as many as possible of the people who attended that first meeting. We would like to bring you together again, discover what has happened to yourselves and your children since January 5, 1952, and see if the dream of a better future born on that day became a reality.

If you were there, or if you know somebody who was, PLEASE get in touch with Sheila Jenner, Editor, Spastics News, at Society headquarters, 12 Park Crescent, London W1. Tel: 01-636-5020.

## SPASTICS NEWS

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